

House Floor Remarks

Motion to Recommit on Energy & Water Appropriations

July 10, 2014

5.00 min

** Motions to Recommit are in order after the Chair calls the voice vote on ENGROSSMENT AND THIRD READING of the bill.

WLE: I have a motion to recommit at the desk.

Speaker Pro Temp: Is the gentleman opposed to the bill?

WLE: I am opposed in its current form.

Speaker Pro Temp: The gentleman qualifies and the Clerk will read the amendment.

Clerk reads

Speaker Pro Temp: The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

WLE: This is the final amendment to the bill which will not kill the bill or send it back to committee. If adopted, the bill will immediately proceed to final passage as amended.

Mr. Speaker, today we come together to vote on an amendment that will not only create infrastructure, but create much needed jobs as well.

Before joining the ranks of Congress last year, I served in the ranks of our nation's military. As Commander of the Illinois National Guard, I oversaw the largest deployment of troops overseas since World War II. Also well known across the state, and particularly along Illinois' Mississippi River border, were the efforts of the men and women of the Illinois National Guard

during flood season. Efforts, resources, and dollars that can be saved with the preventative measures funded in this amendment.

The amendment before us today provides an additional 10 million dollars to the Army Corps of Engineers for projects that could include levee construction, levee repair, flood mitigation, and flood prevention.

Too often, I sent those Guardsmen and women to fight flood waters from the Mississippi River. Too often, I've seen levees break, rivers flow over their banks, and sandbags give way. And all too often, I've seen the after effects of destroyed homes, lost belongings, and the anguish of starting over again.

Just in the past week, three bridges across the Mississippi River have been closed due to flooding concerns. 20 roads, highways, and interstates have been closed or temporarily shuttered in Illinois alone due to flood waters. And the Mississippi River is expected to crest 10 feet above flood stages in some areas this week.

This isn't just a Midwestern issue. In the past five years, every single state in our country has experienced floods or flash flooding. Every dollar that we send to the Army Corps to prevent flooding could be put back into our economy if American families are spared the expense of flood clean up.

We must pass this amendment to provide critical dollars to the Army Corps, while

creating good paying jobs for men and women across the country.

This amendment makes all the difference for people in Alton, Illinois where the Mississippi River is at flood stage this week. This amendment makes all the difference for the people in Grand Tower, Illinois where the Army Corps doesn't have funding to fix the structural inadequacies of the levees the Corps built 60 years ago. Communities are depending on us for leadership.

Also included in this amendment is an additional 10 million dollars for the Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy account. Current language in the bill is almost 113 million less than the 2014 level, and 530

million less than the administration's budget request.

We simply cannot afford such harsh reductions in funding for an area our country desperately needs growth – energy efficiency and independence.

A great example of energy efficient infrastructure and operations is Southern Illinois University in my home district. SIU is committed to sustainability and green operations across campus. The University believes that higher education should be "ecologically sound, socially just and economically viable," giving students a healthy environment to live and learn.

SIU was again named a Green College by The Princeton Review. SIU maintains green

jobs and green processes through their vermicomposting center – designed to take food scraps from dormitories and turn it into compost for campus gardens and the campus Green Roof Initiative. The new Transportation Education Center earned a LEED silver certification.

Its programs and jobs like these, that this amendment will support.

Like all of you, I had the opportunity to listen to my constituents this past week. Over and over again, my constituents stopped to ask me why we spend billions of our tax money to build and rebuild other nations around the world while so many critical improvements need to be made here at home. This amendment won't address all those needs here in America,

but it is an improvement to this appropriations bill and an investment in the long-term needs of our country.

I urge you to vote yes for flood safety. I urge you to vote yes for jobs. I urge you to vote yes for energy independence. I urge you to vote YES for this motion to recommit.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I yield back.

(After the Speaker calls the yeas and nays):

Mr. Speaker, I ask for a recorded vote.